

Testimony  
Of  
Anastasia K. Brown  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
On  
Refugee Protection Issues  
before  
The  
House International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, Global  
Rights, and International Operations

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I am Anastasia Brown, director of Refugee Programs for Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (MRS/USCCB). MRS/USCCB is the largest refugee resettlement agency in the United States. Working with over 100 Catholic dioceses across the nation, we provide resettlement assistance to approximately 15,000 to 20,000 refugees each year, helping them with job placement, housing, and other forms of assistance to ensure their early self-sufficiency.

I would like to thank Subcommittee Chairman Christopher Smith, as well as Ranking Member Donald Payne, for the invitation to speak to you today about refugee and asylum protection issues. MRS/USCCB believes that this is a vital area in which the United States holds an honored tradition as a safe haven for those who flee persecution and terror. We believe that the United States can meet its national security protection goals without jeopardizing this honored tradition of welcoming refugees, asylum-seekers, and other vulnerable populations to our shores.

As we have heard today, there are many challenges which confront the U.S. refugee program, particularly in the post September 11, 2001, world. Today, I recommend four steps that the United States should take to address the needs of refugees around the world so that durable solutions can be found to resolve their plight:

- The Administration and Congress should move immediately to correct the damage caused by recent changes in law relating to material support. These changes were ill-considered. Moreover, they can be interpreted in an overly-broad manner, resulting in the possible denial of refugee protection to many deserving, bona fide refugees;
- The United States should increase funding for humanitarian assistance and resettlement assistance to the more than 13 million refugees in the world, including Cubans and Haitians who flee persecution just off U.S. shores;
- The United States should take steps to meet the annual refugee ceiling by making systemic changes to enhance and expand the U.S. admissions program;
- The United States government should pay immediate attention to special refugee populations, including Cuban and Haitian entrants; North Korean refugees fleeing their oppressive government; and Burmese refugees in Southeast Asia.

## **The Issue of Material Support**

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) prohibits granting refugee status to anyone who is a terrorist or supports terrorist activity. This prohibition is needed to ensure national security and to prevent the extension of refugee protection to those who are undeserving of protection.

However, recent legislation, including the USA Patriot Act and the REAL ID Act, expanded and broadened this law in ways that have had an unintended, negative impact on bona fide refugees. For example, the USA Patriot Act expanded the reach of the terrorism definition by broadening grounds of inadmissibility to anyone who provides “material support” to groups which engage in “terrorist activity.” This includes groups who use weapons or “dangerous devices” with the intent to endanger, directly or indirectly, the safety of one or more individuals or to cause substantial damage to property, for any motive other than “mere personal monetary gain.” Moreover, the REAL ID Act expanded the definition of “non-designated” terrorist organization to include a “group of two or more individuals, whether organized or not, which engages in, or has a subgroup which engages in “any form of terrorist activity.”

These changes were ostensibly designed to protect the United States from genuine terrorist threats. However, they have had the effect of excluding refugees and asylum-seekers who have been victims of terrorism or brutal regimes from U.S. protection. Many Burmese refugees, for example, who have fled religious persecution, have been impacted by the Administration’s delay in interpreting this law because they may have contributed to ethnic or religious organizations that may be associated with sub-groups that oppose the repressive Burmese authorities. Providing any assistance to these organizations can render a person inadmissible under the law, even if they were forced under “duress.”

As written, the law is so broad that it harms any individual who provides even a glass of water, a bowl of rice, or a place to sleep to a member of an organization involved in the defense of that individual against a regime which is actively involved in ethnic cleansing. In one case, a woman who offered two tins of rice to the resistance army, who lost her husband in the conflict and was systematically raped by the Burmese army, would be deemed inadmissible under this provision. There are other compelling cases which demonstrate that the material support bar should not apply to this vulnerable population as well.

This bar to admissibility is having a profound impact on the Burmese refugee population as a whole. For example, the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) referred to the United States 9,463 ethnic Karen refugees from Burma currently located in the Tham Hin refugee camp in Burma. In addition, the UNHCR in Malaysia has referred 3,000 ethnic Chin refugees living in Malaysia to the United States. However, the resettlement of some in these groups is in jeopardy, pending the release of guidance by the Department of Homeland Security regarding the interpretation and implementation of the definitions in the PATRIOT and REAL ID Acts.

Last week, the Department of State exercised its discretionary authority to determine that the material support bar is inapplicable to ethnic Karen refugees in the Tham Hin camp. We are grateful for this determination. However, the process of consultation for this one group took

more than 6 months, and the waiver was unable to provide relief to many in the camp. Meanwhile, Karen refugees with similar claims in other camps cannot be considered, nor can Chin refugees in Malaysia be processed either.

From our perspective, the material support bar should not apply to the situation of the Burmese refugees. In order to solve this problem without changing existing law, DHS should develop a legal interpretation of “material support” which is in line with a plain reading of the statute and exclude actions which are made under duress or could not constitute support because payments were insignificant. DHS also should quickly establish a process for facilitating the admission of refugees and for granting asylum when the circumstances under which the alleged support was provided was involuntary, inadvertent, or otherwise excusable—such as when the support is provided to a group that is not designated as a terrorist group and is in fact engaged in protecting the victims of a brutal and repressive regime. These actions would allow for the application of individual determinations of admissibility by DHS officers not only to refugee cases, but also to individual asylum cases in the United States. It also would obviate the need for a cumbersome inter-agency waiver determination to be made in each instance a refugee group is being considered for resettlement in the United States.

Further, we urge Congress to revisit the law and adjust the material support provisions in the REAL ID Act and the PATRIOT Act to minimize the impact to bona fide refugee groups around the world.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission I would like to submit for the record principles developed by Refugee Council USA, the nation’s leading coalition of refugee resettlement, human rights, and humanitarian organizations, which we believe should govern DHS interpretation of the material support law.

### **U.S. Funding for Overseas Humanitarian Assistance and Refugee Resettlement**

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the number of refugees around the world remains at around 13 million, many of whom are residing in deplorable conditions in refugee camps, with little hope for improving their situations or for obtaining a durable solution to their plight. Sufficient funding is needed to ensure that their basic humanitarian and resettlement needs are met.

We are deeply concerned about FY 2006 funding for refugee resettlement and protection. The FY 2006 budget appropriations for refugee programs falls far short of meeting the need. At least \$220 million more is needed to meet overseas assistance and resettlement needs this year.

We are also concerned about funding levels for Fiscal Year 2007, which the House of Representatives will soon consider. The Administration has proposed \$834 million for Migration and Refugee Assistance, \$55 million for the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account, and \$ 615 million for the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement (DHHS/ORR). These totals are insufficient to meet the needs of refugees both abroad and in the United States. To achieve this end, we recommend at least \$1.2 billion for the MRA account, at least \$55 million for the ERMA account, and at

least \$798 million for the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (DHHS/ORR), and sufficient funds for other essential refugee related budget items.

Without an increase in federal funding, the Administration will not be able to continue to revive the U.S. refugee program to provide the durable solution of resettlement to more refugees. An MRA total of \$1.2 billion would provide \$333 million for the United States to admit 90,000 refugees in FY 2007. Additionally, this overall MRA funding level would provide \$780 million to enhance our overseas assistance funding to a level that could meet more of the desperate needs. This MRA figure would also allow the other two items within MRA – aid to refugees resettling in Israel and the administrative costs of the State Department's refugee bureau – to be funded at expected levels.

Increased funding for refugee protection is essential to avoid massive shortfalls in food, medicine and other vital supplies that continue to affect refugees across Africa and elsewhere. It would also support the work of international relief organizations – including those that fund U.S.-based charitable agencies – that are providing humanitarian assistance and protecting refugees from further harm. This funding level for overseas assistance would reverse the effects of inflation and other cuts and would facilitate the United States' continued leadership in refugee assistance and protection

DHHS/ORR's ever-expanding mandate requires at least \$798 million for FY 2007. Of this amount, \$397 million would be available for transitional, medical services to refugees and the Match Grant program, which leverages private sector funds to help refugees reach rapid self-sufficiency. \$187 million would be provided for Social Services to help fund ethnic community based organizations, vulnerable populations programs, and community integration projects to provide assistance for up to 100,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, and Cuban-Haitian entrants. A total of \$798 million for ORR would also allow \$21 million for human trafficking programs and \$30 million for programs under the Torture Victims Relief Act.

Additionally, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 required ORR to take on the duty of caring for the more than 7,000 unaccompanied alien children who come into federal custody each year. We believe that DHHS/ORR's new responsibility for unaccompanied alien children will require at least \$105 million in FY 2007.

In addition to the refugee program functions in the Departments of State and HHS, sufficient funding is needed for the Department of Homeland Security to adjudicate refugee claims and ensure that appropriate security measures are undertaken in the U.S. refugee program. Among the most important new initiatives that should receive direct funding is the Refugee Corps within the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. We urge that \$20 million be available for the Refugee Corps. Also, the DHS Bureau of Customs and Border Protection must be provided with sufficient resources to inspect and admit refugees, as well as to fulfill statutory requirements that Employment Authorization Documents be provided to refugees upon entry, in a manner that does not restrict refugee admissions or unduly increase the per capita costs charged to the State Department's refugee budget.

Finally, sufficient USAID and other US foreign assistance funding should be requested for services to internally displaced persons, torture victims, trafficking victims, and other victims of conflict, disasters, and oppression worldwide.

### **Systemic Changes to Enhance and Expand the U.S. Admissions Program**

As I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, a new world order trying to preserve and sustain refugee protection requires the United States to reach out to refugees in “hot spots” across the globe, such as Africa, Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, and portions of Europe. To serve the refugees in these areas of need, more tools are required to build the capacity of the admissions program to identify, process, and resettle refugees from various parts of the world.

Refugee Council USA has developed a series of recommendations to help build the capacity needed to meet these new challenges, which are detailed in our interim report.

Mr. Chairman, many of these recommendations have already been endorsed by Congress and enacted into law. The FY 2004 Consolidated Appropriations bill called for several reforms to the refugee admissions program, including the following:

- Using private voluntary organizations in the identification, referral, and processing of refugees for admission to the United States;
- Prioritizing female head-of-households, unaccompanied children, long-stayers, and urban refugees outside of traditional camp settlements for resettlement; and
- Making the P-3 family reunification category available to all nationalities.

Mr. Chairman, we urge you and your colleagues on the subcommittee to press the Administration to implement these recommendations immediately. Without building the capacity to identify and resettle refugees in need, we are concerned that the admission of refugees into the program will remain at the low levels of the past two years.

For purposes of today’s hearing, I would like to further highlight a few of our recommendations.

#### *Enhancing Referral Capacity*

In recent years, the State Department has relied heavily on UNHCR to refer vulnerable refugees to the U.S. admissions program for resettlement. As noted in the recent report titled, *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2005*, the UNHCR faces many constraints in providing adequate resettlement referrals for refugees in need of protection. Additional avenues for referrals must be created so that more vulnerable populations and individuals have access to the U.S. program.

First, the State Department should look to non-governmental organizations that work with refugee populations as an avenue for referral. Non-governmental organizations, including Joint Voluntary Agencies (JVAs) and Overseas Processing Entities (OPEs), which prepare cases for review by DHS, are uniquely positioned to provide referrals because of their daily work with refugee populations.

While the State Department has operated small referral and NGO training programs in Nairobi, Kenya and Ghana, it has yet to expand the program to other regions. Even as the State Department has taken steps during the last several years to expand its capacity to identify and process refugees for resettlement, not a single JVA/OPE has been developed to assist in these efforts. During this same period, there have been several locations that could have benefited from the presence of a JVA to identify refugees for resettlement.

In addition, U.S. embassies should be given greater authority to identify and refer refugees to the U.S. program. In a recent report to Congress, the State Department indicated its intent to authorize embassy referrals for individual protection cases. We urge that this authority be extended so that embassies may identify and refer groups of refugees as well.

#### *Building Capacity to Identify and Process Refugees*

Another area of concern is the ability of the U.S. government to identify and process refugees for the U.S. program. Our government, including the Department of Homeland Security, should make more efforts to create a “pipeline” of refugees for resettlement that is continually filled. The State Department must be more proactive in identifying refugee populations for the succeeding years, so that there is at least a three-month pipeline of “travel-ready” refugees. We recommend several additional tools to achieve this goal.

First, we recommend that the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security create “Rapid Response Teams” which would field NGO experts on a regular basis to analyze the resettlement needs of refugee populations and help establish initial processing mechanisms to identify and refer cases for U.S. admissions consideration. These teams would be deployed in areas of extreme need and would work with State Department officials on a regular basis to ensure that NGO efforts, which would supplement the work of UNHCR and PRM, are consistent with accepted standards for assessing the suitability of persons for resettlement.

We are pleased that a Refugee Corps has been created within the Department of Homeland Security. We are concerned, however, that the Administration continues to pay for the Refugee Corps through immigration user fees. As mentioned, we urge Congress to provide \$20 million in funding for the Refugee Corps through the annual appropriations process and general revenues.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Congress passed legislation in 2001 which requires the Department of Homeland Security to issue Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) to refugees upon their arrival at ports-of-entry into the United States. Currently, only 35 EADs are being issued per plane. We ask you to urge DHS to implement this provision of law by issuing EADs to all refugees upon their arrival in the United States. A proposed solution to issue EADs through the Nebraska Service Center after entry leaves refugees without work authorization for months and, in our view, does not meet the requirements of the law.

#### *Expanding Access to the U.S. Refugee Program*

To reach the most vulnerable of refugees, the State Department should expand access to the program for certain categories of refugees who currently do not have channels into the U.S. program. In the last several years, the State Department has limited the processing categories available for resettlement, relying primarily on the P-1 category for emergency needs. We recommend an expansion of the P-2 and P-3 categories.

The P-2 category allows for the resettlement of special groups designated to be of interest to the United States. The State Department has shown a willingness to expand the number of P-2 groups, but has not yet significantly done so. In the past year, only two new groups have been designated for processing. One unfortunate impact of the material support bar is that UNHCR is unwilling to expand group referrals until the situation is resolved. This results in even more reliance on NGO and U.S. government identification of groups.

We also recommend expanding the P-3 category, which prioritizes family members for resettlement, to all nationalities. While the State Department has expressed public support for this concept, it has recommended only twenty nationalities, while MRS/USCCB resettled refugees from 37 nationalities in FY 2005. Moreover, Liberia was pulled from the list of eligible nationalities because refugees are being encouraged to return home. However, many of these refugees are vulnerable, have nothing to return to, and would be better served by reunification with their families in the United States. The absence of a “universal” P-3 has the effect of channeling more refugee claims to an overburdened UNHCR and contributes to misrepresentation in the program. Family relationships and reunification should remain a cornerstone of the U.S. refugee program.

Finally, the State Department should place a priority on responding to the needs of special populations of refugees. As a first step, the State Department should identify groups of unaccompanied refugee children for resettlement in the United States. In the past few years, less than 100 unaccompanied refugee children have been resettled in the United States. In their recent report to Congress, the State Department conceded that more progress must be made in this area.

We recommend that the State Department deploy NGO specialists to conduct best interest determinations for groups of unaccompanied refugee children. We also recommend that special guidelines be developed for the processing of unaccompanied and separated children, including a processing priority designation. In addition, groups such as women at risk, long-stayers, urban refugees, and victims of torture, should be given special consideration.

### **“Wet Foot/Dry Foot” Policy impacting Cuban refugees**

Mr. Chairman, we would also like to comment on the long-established U.S. policy toward Cuban refugees who arrive in the United States by boat and reach land. Cubans who are able to escape repression in Cuba and reach U.S. soil—hence the term, “dry feet”—are granted asylum and, under the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, are able to adjust their status to permanent resident in one year. While we do not disagree with the treatment of Cubans who reach land under this policy, we disagree that other vulnerable Caribbean-based populations, such as Haitians, often



are not afforded a real opportunity to establish their asylum claim while on land or when interdicted on the high seas.

We would support a consistent asylum policy for Cubans, Haitians, and other vulnerable refugee populations who reach land and are interdicted off U.S. shores---namely, an opportunity to have their asylum claims heard by a qualified adjudicator or immigration judge. Such a consistent policy is needed for Haitian refugees, who often face similar circumstances as Cubans, but are not treated similarly.

### *The Cuban-Haitian Entrant Program*

Once Cubans and Haitians arrive in the United States, it is vital that they receive appropriate services to help them integrate into local communities. The Cuban-Haitian Primary/Secondary Entrant Program (CHPSEP), which is funded through the Department of Homeland Security, provides integration services to these populations, including employment, counseling, and housing assistance. The program has successfully integrated thousands of Cuban and Haitian entrants for the past twenty-five years, but, because it is funded through user fees and not an annual budget appropriation, has been plagued with inconsistent funding.

Over the past several years, nongovernmental organizations who help operate the program, including MRS/USCCB and Church World Service (CWS), have either had to provide their own funds to continue operations or suspended activity altogether. We urge the subcommittee to work with their colleagues on the appropriations committee to establish an annual line-item for this program in the federal budget funded through general revenues. This would provide the stability to ensure that Cuban and Haitian arrivals are provided the services they need to successfully integrate and contribute to their new country.

A recent obstacle to the resettlement of Cubans in the United States has been the issuance of 9-digit alien identification numbers to Cubans who arrive in Miami through the Cuban visa lottery program. This is a problem because the Miami office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) can only process employment authorization documents for Cubans with 8-digit alien identification numbers. As a result, the processing must be completed at the Nebraska processing center, which can take several weeks for completion. In the interim, Cuban refugees have resided in a Miami hotel at government expense and have been unable to search for employment and begin integrating into local communities. We urge USCIS to address this problem as soon as possible.

### **North Korean Refugees in China**

The U.S. Catholic bishops remain concerned with the plight of North Korean refugees escaping persecution, including religious persecution, in their homeland. In 2004, members of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Migration visited China to investigate circumstances surrounding North Korean refugees in China. The same concerns which were troubling then still exist today---namely, that North Korean refugees are not afforded protection in China and must live underground or escape to a third country such as South Korea in order to avoid being returned to North Korea to certain incarceration and even death. In our view, the world community can no

longer allow for this situation to continue in the future. In this regard, we recommend that the U.S. government strongly encourage the Chinese government to provide refugee status to North Koreans fleeing persecution in their homeland and to permit, where appropriate, North Korean refugees to be resettled in a third country, including the United States.

The U.S. government should offer resettlement to this population and should encourage other countries, such as South Korea, to offer resettlement to this vulnerable population as well. While we were encouraged to see that six refugees from North Korea entered the United States last week, the need is far greater. Finally, UNHCR should designate North Korean refugees as in need of protection.

### **Burmese Refugees in Southeast Asia**

Another vulnerable population affected by the material support issue and other protection issues are Burmese refugees in Southeast Asia. I think it is important to note that the entire population of uprooted Burmese currently stands at an estimated 1.5 million. Of that total, as many as 800,000 are internally displaced within Burma, while about 700,000 are refugees located in neighboring countries. Thailand hosts the largest population of Burmese refugees and asylum seekers, and I will speak more about those shortly.

Of the neighboring countries, Bangladesh hosts about 150,000 Burmese refugees, mostly ethnic Rohingya. Of those, only 20,000 are in the two camps operated by the UNHCR, while the rest are outside the camps with no official status and living in difficult conditions. About 60,000 ethnic Chin from Burma live in Mizoram State, which is located in the eastern half of India. India considers this population to be illegal and will not grant UNHCR access to them. Smaller number of Burmese Chin and other ethnic minorities live as urban refugees in New Delhi and are extremely marginalized and vulnerable. MRS/USCCB and other refugee organizations have long advocated for the resettlement of the Burmese in New Delhi, but with no success.

An estimated 25,000 Burmese refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly ethnic Chin and Rohingya, live in Malaysia, and they, too, live in extremely difficult conditions. While the United States has committed to resettling several thousand Chin from Malaysia, the need is far greater than the 3,000 the UNHCR agreed to refer to the United States, and those plans are now in jeopardy because of the “material support to terrorists” grounds of inadmissibility. Meanwhile, the refugees in Malaysia are being detained, beaten, and deported.

Finally, several thousand Burmese are seeking asylum in countries outside the region, including the United States and other industrialized countries. While the United States has traditionally granted protection to significant numbers of Burmese each year through our asylum system, our continued ability to do so is also threatened by the issue of material support and by new asylum standards established by the REAL ID Act of 2005.

As I stated, Thailand hosts the majority of Burmese refugees. According to recent statistics, more than 450,000 refugees and asylum-seekers reside in Thailand. Of those, 142,917 live in 9 camps along the Thai-Burma border, most of which are of the Karen and Karenni ethnic groups. According to UNHCR, 100,840 refugees in the camps are registered, and 36,874 are

unregistered, which means that the Thai government does not “officially” recognize these refugees.<sup>1</sup> This includes about 8,000 unaccompanied minors living in camps, a group that I will discuss in greater detail later. There are also an estimated 200,000 ethnic Shan refugees living in Thailand with no legal protection and no access to the camps. The remainder of refugees in Thailand is Karen/Karenni refugees living outside camps in various rural and urban settings.

### **The Option of Third Country Resettlement for Burmese refugees**

There are three durable solutions for refugees in the world: 1). repatriation to their home at such time as it is safe to return; 2). permanent resettlement in the country of first asylum; and 3). resettlement to a third country. Because of the ongoing civil war in Burma, which has lasted for over twenty years, it is highly unlikely that large scale repatriation will occur in the near future. For political and economic reasons, the Thai government and the governments of other neighboring countries have been unwilling to permanently accept the Burmese refugee population. The only real solution to the plight of many of the Burmese refugees is resettlement to a third country, such as the United States. This option would provide them an opportunity to start their lives and the lives of their families anew.

The Thai government has recently shown a willingness to consider third country resettlement for the Burmese refugee population in their country. The United States government, through the Office of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), has recognized that repatriation to Burma and permanent resettlement in Thailand are not possible at this time and has agreed to consider resettlement for approximately 9,463 refugees in the Tham Hin camp west of Bangkok. Since a waiver for this group has been approved, these refugees could be resettled in the United States during the current fiscal year. While the State Department has now authorized discretion to allow for processing of this camp, the UNHCR will not be able to refer refugees in other camps for consideration until the material support issue is addressed more comprehensively. The government’s overly broad interpretation of this law is likely to bar the admission of most of the Burmese refugees currently being considered for resettlement, even though these refugees are not terrorists and are in fact victims of a brutal regime who urgently require protection.

### **The Plight of Burmese Unaccompanied Refugee Minors**

Within the Burmese refugee population are thousands of unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs). URMs are defined as children who are not currently living with their parents or primary care givers when they became refugees. In reality, these children have lost their parents, some of whom have been killed in the conflict. These children have languished in camps for years and have no access to education beyond the tenth grade. They have little hope for their future and face the prospect of living in refugee camps most of their lives.

According to the UNHCR, there are approximately 8,000 Burmese unaccompanied refugee minors in Thailand and an untold number in Malaysia. In Thailand, these children live in the

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<sup>1</sup> Registration is an important element of refugee protection in Thailand, as it allows refugees legal protection and the right to remain in the country. In addition, it allows for an exit permit to be granted if a refugee is invited to resettle in a third country.

border camps in a variety of arrangements, including in boarding houses, with blood relatives, with non relative foster care families, or on their own.

In Malaysia, a smaller number of Burmese URMS of teenage age live in the jungles outside Kuala Lumpur. These teenage boys eke out an existence by working at local construction sites or in other menial jobs. They have no access to education and no future other than what they currently know.

MRS/USCCB believes that URMs are particularly vulnerable and, under certain circumstances, should be given the opportunity to escape the imprisonment of refugee camps and start a new life in a new country. Burmese URMS, many whom know only life in a refugee camp, should be considered for resettlement in the United States. In order to achieve this end, we make the following recommendations:

- Child welfare experts should be deployed to camps in Thailand to assist in the development and implementation of protocols for serving URMs, including conducting more comprehensive and ongoing best interest determinations (BIDs) and establishing oversight mechanisms to ensure appropriate child welfare conditions in the camps;
- Active tracing efforts should be ongoing within Thailand, including in the camps and in major urban areas;
- For URMS whose BIDs indicate such, resettlement should be pursued expeditiously;
- UNHCR should ensure that no URMs are living in the camps without proper adult guardianship. UNHCR, with U.S. assistance, should develop educational programs to allow young boys and girls to continue their education; and
- In Malaysia, UNHCR should deploy child welfare experts to make BIDs for ethnic Chin teenage boys living in the Malaysian jungle.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the many challenges facing refugees and asylum-seekers who attempt to find protection in the United States. It is clear that we live in a new world in which our nation must remain vigilant against outside threats. However, we have the capability to protect the American public without sacrificing our traditional role as a safe haven for the oppressed of the world.

The recommendations we have outlined are a road map for ensuring that our nation can meet the goals of national security and refugee protection. We urge you, Mr. Chairman, as well as your colleagues on the subcommittee, to seriously consider these recommendations and to continue to work on behalf of refugees and other vulnerable populations who look to the United States as their last hope.

Thank you.